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# BORDER TERRITORY DEVELOPMENT

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## BORDER POSITION AS A FACTOR OF STRATEGIC AND TERRITORIAL PLANNING IN RUSSIAN REGIONS IN THE BALTIC

G. Fedorov\*



*In the conditions of globalization, Russian border regions can form trans-border regions through cooperation with the neighbouring territories of other states. The optimisation of spatial organisation of economy, social sphere, and nature management using the tools of spatial planning is fully justified in the case of trans-border regions as well as in that of national ones. However, in Russia, spatial (strategic and territorial) planning does not imply joint development of documents with the border regions of neighbouring states. Nevertheless, the border position of a region (at least, due to the presence of border zones) has a significant effect on the content of regional strategies for socioeconomic development and schemes for territorial planning of constituent entities and municipal districts. The result is a combination of measures aimed simultaneously at solving defence problems, delivering economic security, and supporting trans-border cooperation. The Baltic macroregion has vast experience in developing joint Russia-EU programmes. This experience of coordinating activities in the economic and sociocultural spheres, as well as international spatial planning innovations (German landscape planning, etc.), can be adopted in Russia.*

**Key words:** spatial planning, strategic planning, territorial planning, trans-border regions

### Introduction

The last decade — especially its final years — will not go down in history as “the Age of Success” in the cooperation between Russia and the European Union; and the lack of progress in this respect negatively affects the pace of development of both par-

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ties. At the same time, trans-border Russian/EU relations in the Baltic Sea region have, until very recently, been quite productive. Formally, said relations also extend to spatial planning. For instance, Russia is a part of the VASAB (Vision and Strategy around the Baltic Sea) initiative, which coordinates the spatial planning activities of its 11 member-states and thus promotes sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region though strengthening its transnational character [28]. In my opinion, however, Russian involvement in this project has been far from sufficient and it has yielded predictably meager progress in terms of increasing trans-border cooperation, which is significantly less intensive than that between neighbor countries within the European Union. Nothing is done to either develop or even coordinate proposals for joint strategic or territorial planning, although such work might have been mutually beneficial for all parties involved.

In Russia, *strategic* planning and *territorial* planning are two types of spatial planning. While they do share a number of features, they are ultimately realized in the form of two separate regulating documents issued by two different federal agencies. Territorial planning is the domain of the Ministry of Regional Development; strategic planning is the task of the Ministry of Economy.

Each of the two types of spatial planning has a role to play in the development of regional economic policy. Strategic planning details the conditions and possible scenarios of *development*; territorial planning is concerned with the use of land and conditions of *placement* of various objects. Together, these types of planning account for the industrial and the territorial dimensions of regional development.

Another reason to differentiate between the strategic and territorial planning is the different activities that are performed under each of the two “umbrellas”. Thus, strategic planning — similar to the economic one — deals mostly with the issues of social development. Territorial planning, on the other hand, is concerned with the functional zoning and determining the general directions of spatial development, which has little to do with strategic planning as such.

Some experts call for a unified regulating document to bring the two planning domains together. Theoretically, it is a good idea, yet its practical implementation can be seriously hindered by the lack of coordination between the two ministries and the lack of a unifying meta-structure (similar to that of the Soviet-era State Planning Committee, Gosplan, and its subsidiaries) that would ensure necessary concordance of the industrial and the territorial within a more general domain of spatial planning.

Since, in our case, spatial planning is *de facto* divided into two types, I will separately address the trans-border influence on the Russian Baltics in terms of strategy and territory.

### Strategic Planning in Trans-Border Regions

In its *Guidelines to the Drafting of Regional Strategies of Social and Economic Development* the Ministry of Regional Development underlines that the strategic planning of regional social and economic development

should be done after evaluation the region's capacity for social and economic development as a Russian federal subject; a practice, which helps set priorities and long-term development aims. Strategic planning thus ensures the coordination of short-term policies and long-term strategic targets of the region, defines the scope of joint activities and the search for new areas of cooperation between public executive authorities and the representatives of various commercial and non-commercial organizations. In perspective, this translates into better coordination of effort between the federal and the regional executive authorities [20].

Unfortunately, the *Guidelines* do not cover the coordination of strategic plans between the regions and the municipalities within these regions, on the one hand, and between said strategies and the respective territorial planning documents, on the other hand. The need to consider any kind of territorial aspects of strategic planning is not mentioned at all. Of course, a given municipal strategy will take into account some provisions of the development strategy of its "parent" region, but the sum of all municipal strategies within the region will never amount to a comprehensive strategy of the whole region. As for the territorial dimension, it is generally accounted for — to an extent — in regional strategies. For example, when planning for future placement of industrial production or production clusters, or when deciding about placing specific buildings of industrial or public infrastructure. These aspects have to be reflected in the documents regulating territorial planning, which, in turn, have to be adjusted for the new strategies of social and economic development of the region. Unfortunately, in practice such cross-coordination of important of documentation is alarmingly slow, which leaves room for simultaneous implementation of mutually contradictory provisions.

Developers of strategies for border regions follow the same methodology and the same set of factors outlined in the *Guidelines*. Since one of these factors is "involvement in the global network of trade, information and financial exchange" [20], the border regions can — potentially — account for some differences in their strategic planning. In my view, however, more attention should be paid to the specific qualitative features of different types of regions at the stage of strategy development.

In the globalized world, the use of the core-periphery model to analyze and forecast regional development is becoming increasingly popular. The model describes a polarized regional system, with the differentiation growing stronger at all territorial levels as globalization picks up its pace. According to this model, the periphery (or border) regions are the most vulnerable and therefore often the most depressive ones. Friedmann's regional typology reflects this concept; he proposes to divide all areas into core regions (regions of growth), downward transitional areas, and periphery (which is further divided into upward transitional areas, downward transitional areas and resource frontiers) [25].

Border regions are often described as "downward transitional" because of their less advantageous (compared to the inland areas) geographical and market placement. But when active international connection is established

between the core regions and upward transitional areas of the cooperating nations, there emerge new types of trans-border areas that exist to support this international connection. These regions can be called international transitional areas, or international development corridors [7]. In the Russian Northwest, these are the city of Saint Petersburg with the Leningrad region in tow, and the Kaliningrad region.

A region — any region — is formed as a result of an increasingly tight interaction of economic, social and political subjects. International transitional areas — development corridors for adjacent countries — involve, primarily, economic subjects closely connected by their commercial ties. Some of these ties exist to satisfy the needs of border regions themselves, but most of them are there to “service” international transit of goods and services between the partner nations. However, with time, the ties that have once been purely economic begin to develop closer cooperation between public authorities and other political structures; this translates into joint projects in the sphere of culture, research, public healthcare and sport. These trans-border connections are mostly horizontal and are created on the basis of parity (unlike vertical connections that are based on subordination). They ensure the development of international networks localized in industrial and inter-industrial clusters. In the end, they lead to the development of a new territorial system, a trans-border region, which I define as a localized international social and economic network spanning through the entire area of adjacent border regions of the neighboring countries.

In its development, trans-border cooperation undergoes a series of transformations [21]:

- 1) local cross-border contacts;
- 2) agreements of cooperation between economic agents, non-governmental organizations, and municipalities;
- 3) temporary networks serving joint trans-border cooperation projects;
- 4) new network-based spatial forms of international integration: territorial units of supranational level that consist of the regions of several states and are characterized by active cross-border and interregional cooperation with high degree of social and economic integration (euroregions, growth triangles, upward development areas, trans-border clusters, etc.).

Not every cross-border area can be automatically called a trans-border cooperation region. If the adjacent regions are just beginning to work out their mutual cooperation scheme the term “trans-border area” applies better. One can only talk about the emergence of a full-scale trans-border cooperation region if the connection between the adjacent regions is so tight that it becomes vitally important for each of the parties involved. When there is a need for an international development corridor, there will eventually emerge a trans-border region. However, there are other cases when two or more cross-border regions develop active cooperation. One example of such area is a trans-border area on the either side of the Russian-Finnish border, formed between Karelia and adjacent Finnish regions.

The development of trans-border regions fall within the framework of the general rationalization process, which is characterized by the emergence

of “compact” areas united by high level of internal integration (so-called “coherent”, or integrated, areas)<sup>1</sup>. The resulting trans-border regions normally also develop relevant legal framework between administrative and municipal authorities of the countries involved. This often takes the form of a mutual cooperation agreement. In a more advanced scenario, the regions create an association, usually a legal entity that has a designated permanent body of governance.

If every country whose areas form a trans-border region enjoys a high level of social and economic development, their mutual cooperation will be at its peak. However, if the resources of the adjacent areas are different, but complimentary, there is a chance for a trans-border region to become a new region of growth. According to the theory of growth triangles, in a perfect scenario is played out when three adjacent regions are involved in the implementation of the same strategy with each of the regions rich in one resource: natural, workforce, and financial (and/or technological) [26].

Compared to the inland cooperation regions, forming within the country, trans-border regions will often have less connection with their foreign counterparts than with their national partners, yet the former will determine both internal economic structure and living conditions of adjacent areas, and, in some cases (especially in the case of growth corridors), type of labor specialization within the country. That is why the enhancement of economic connections, reaching higher levels of trans-border cooperation, the development of trans-border infrastructure, the adjustment of the structure of regional economy so that it becomes export-oriented should become a standard strategy for the border regions should they wish to get rid of economic depression and change their periphery development status.

### **EU-Russia Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area and the Development of Territorial Planning**

There have been two major achievements in terms of trans-border cooperation with Russia in the Baltic Sea area: small border traffic agreement between Poland and the Russian Federation introduced for the Kaliningrad region and adjacent Polish territories, and the implementation of Interreg IVB trans-border cooperation projects. Cross-border trade is quite active, and there is growing tourist traffic between the Russian Baltic regions and adjacent European countries. However, trans-border cooperation barely gets a mention in the strategic planning documents issued by the border areas and their municipalities. There are no examples, for instance, when either Russia, or EU, or Belarus would even acknowledge the relevant documents of territorial planning of the other parties, let alone develop joint strategic projects. A formal barrier preventing the countries from accounting for trans-border cooperation on the level of legislation is the lack of a relevant federal law, *On Trans-border Cooperation*, which is perpetually under discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> See [6].

The main document regulating territorial planning in Russia is the *Urban Development Code of the Russian Federation* [4]. It has provisions for the development of further, detailing legislation on the federal, regional and municipal levels. It regulates the allocation of functional zones, the placement of infrastructure for federal and municipal needs, the allocation of special zones. According to the Code, territorial planning should be based on the strategies and/or programs of strategic development of industrial sectors, national projects, programs of social and economic development of the federal subjects, programs and plans of municipal development and international projects. That way, there will be a certain degree of consistency between the documents of territorial and strategic development.

While the Urban Code provides for the possibility of joint development of strategic documents by two or more Russian federal subjects or municipal authorities, it says nothing of the sort about the adjacent regions or municipalities of the two or more neighboring countries. Such documents, however, are invaluable to the border regions of Russia, since they often find themselves on the periphery of national development.

To organize territorial planning in the trans-border areas on the border between Russia and EU it would make sense to look at the experience of European countries that implement, among other projects, the VASAB spatial planning initiative spanning the entire Baltic Sea area, including its Russian segment. Territorial planning could thus become an important part of the activities carried out by the Council of the Baltic Sea States. There is some interesting experience of utilizing German landscape planning strategies in the Kaliningrad region already<sup>2</sup>.

From the viewpoint of the systematic approach, a stable in regional economic studies, the administrative territorial entities and municipalities that become the objects of territorial planning represent the so-called “territorial social economic systems”. Therefore, we can 1) single out the elements of these systems and 2) evaluate connections between them. In the globalized world, from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and onwards, we have seen the development and expansion of different social, cultural, political, etc. connections between the individual entities of territorial social and economic systems. In territorial studies, the focus of attention has been shifting from the core and center entities to the connections between them.

Yet the cluster approach, a tool of strategic planning that analyses horizontal connections between the subjects, still has to cross over to the territorial planning of the regions. Yet the researchers who study both internal and external trans-border relations not only speak about clusters, but also of other, new forms of territorial international economic integration (TIEIF). At the macro-level, these are the larger regions, growth triangles, megacorrivers and coastal trans-border zones. At the meso-level, these are euroregions, development corridors, Scandinavian groups. At the micro-level these are trans-border industrial districts, trans-border clusters, polycentric border bridge-regions<sup>3</sup>. All of these can become the cores for the emerging trans-border meso- and micro-regions.

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<sup>2</sup> See [5].

<sup>3</sup> See [6].

There has been a lot of research dedicated to the possibilities of implementation of joint projects of territorial planning between the Russian Northwest and its neighbors. Unfortunately, Russia is less than an active participant of the VASAB initiative, and the Interreg IV (2007—2013) implemented within the Interreg IVA Baltic Region neighborhood program can only have Russian organization as associate members. However, the Russian Federation does participate in the cross-border partnership projects, and co-finances such Interreg IVB initiatives, as *Kolarctic*, *Karelia*, *South-East Finland/Russia*, *Estonia/Latvia/Russia* (60 projects altogether, of which 7 are large infrastructural projects, with the total budget of EUR135 million [18]). The participation of Russian federal subjects in the activities of nine euroregions and similar structures is a good sign and a prerequisite for further development of joint cooperation. A lot has been achieved through the introduction of small border traffic between Russia (the Kaliningrad region) and the adjacent Polish voivodeships, and of the 72-hour tourist visas for visitors to the Russian Baltics — the Kaliningrad region and Saint Petersburg<sup>4</sup>.

In the development of new types of territorial planning for the subjects of Russian Federation and for the Russian municipalities in the Baltic Sea area it is necessary to account for the proposals for the creation of TIEIFs. And these proposals already exist. A Finnish researcher, Urpo Kivikari, writes about the development of Southern Baltic and Eastern Baltic growth triangles [26; 27]. His Polish colleague, Tadeuzs Palmowski has theorized the idea of a bipolar development system between the Polish Tri-City (Gdansk, Sopot and Gdynia) and the Kaliningrad region [16]. The Kaliningrad economists have further developed this idea to propose a tri-polar system to include Klaipeda into the list and to enhance the production capacity of the euroregions [10; 22]. Cases have been made for trans-border clusters on either side of the Russia/EU border [14], for the joint use of the Vistula and Curonian bays' resources and coast by Russia, Poland and Lithuania [12]. A number of publications have been dedicated to the perfection of existing forms of trans-border cooperation [13; 15; 18; 19; 23], and the development of trans-border regions [8; 9; 11; 24]. It is also worth considering the experience of TIEIF development and trans-border cooperation in the macro-regions outside the Baltic Sea area [1—3; 17].

The development of joint spatial development projects within the new program of cross-border cooperation for 2014—2020 that falls within the scope of euroregions and other established forms of international cooperation would be beneficial even without the relevant legislation. Such initiative would stimulate the development of the border regions of the neighboring countries and put them on the path of adjustment of their legal framework. At the same time, for the border regions within the Russian Federation (until there is necessary legislation regulating trans-border cooperation in place) it is necessary to include the recommendations for the development of joint trans-border projects into the guidelines for strategic and territorial planning at the federal, regional and municipal levels.

<sup>4</sup> Similar arrangement exists in Moscow (Sheremetyevo).



## Conclusion

1. Border position should be treated as a more important factor in spatial planning. Its qualities should be reflected in the documents regulating strategic and territorial planning of the Russian border areas and their municipalities.

2. Development of trans-border regions gives competitive advantage to the regions included in the trans-border cooperation and contributes to their sustainability. For this, joint development of strategic and territorial planning documents could be a sensible path to take.

3. Russian federal subjects in the Baltic Sea area that are particularly active in the development of neighborhood cooperation in trans-border area can become pilot regions in the development of joint strategic and territorial planning projects.

4. It is necessary to adopt the Federal law *On Trans-border Cooperation* to further facilitate joint efforts in this respect.

5. It would also be beneficial if Russia and the EU ceased to oppose each other economically and adopt a new agreement on cooperation, which would replace the PCA that expired on December 1, 2007.

6. It is necessary to introduce amendments to the documents regulating strategic planning and to the Urban Code so that these would make provisions for the border regions wishing to participate in the development of trans-border cooperation.

7. Furthermore, it is necessary to use positive international experience (for example, German landscape planning) in the development of relevant territorial planning legislation.

8. Development of joint projects of strategic and territorial planning by the neighboring border areas constituting a transnational region will facilitate the development of international industrial cooperation, enhancement of the cooperation in the social sphere and the introduction of rational use of natural resources. It is therefore recommended to be more active in seeking partnership with the CBSS, various EU-based projects and foundations. Russian research foundations (with foreign participation), euroregions and various partnership agreements with the foreign counterparts can facilitate further development in this respect.

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